

# NEWS FROM ED MARKEY

**United States Congress**

**Massachusetts Seventh District**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**January 27, 2005**

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## **MARKEY URGES THE STATE DEPARTMENT TO COOPERATE WITH OUR CANADIAN NEIGHBORS**

**Washington, D.C.-** Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA), a senior member of the Homeland Security Committee, today released a letter from the State Department indicating that U.S. officials would not cooperate with a Canadian inquiry into the detention and deportation of Canadian citizen, Maher Arar, to Syria where he was held and reportedly tortured for 10 months.

“The U.S. government is standing in the way of full disclosure of what happened to Maher Arar, a Canadian citizen,” said Markey, who went on to say, “We should be doing everything we can to help one of our closest allies and our neighbor to the north find out how one of its citizens ended up being sent into the torture chambers of Syria.”

On September 26, 2002 Maher Arar was detained for suspected terrorist ties by U.S. authorities in New York, while on a connecting flight through JFK on his return to his home country of Canada. Mr. Arar was detained in the U.S. for 13 days, then he was sent to Syria via Jordan. He was imprisoned and reportedly tortured in Syria for 10 months before the Canadian government secured his release.

The Canadian government launched a formal inquiry on February 5, 2004 into how and why Mr. Arar, a Canadian citizen, was detained in the U.S. and deported to Syria not Canada. As part of this inquiry, on May 26, 2004, the Lead Commission Counsel requested records, statements or access to witnesses related to the case of Maher Arar from the U.S. Department of State. The State Department declined to provide any documents or information to the Canadian investigation, on the grounds that this investigation focused on the actions of only Canadian officials.

On September 30, 2004 Rep. Markey sent a letter to State urging the Department to reconsider its decision to cooperate with the Canadian investigation, but the Congressman received a response stating that it had decided not to do so. The State Department letter went on to say that the decision to remove Mr. Arar was made by the United States not Canada, but that Mr. Arar was initially put on a terrorist lookout list based on information received from Canada. This is the first time that the U.S. has declared that it was Canadian intelligence that flagged Mr. Arar as a potential threat. The letter maintains that Mr. Arar was a threat: “We believed then and still believe that Mr. Arar’s removal was in the best interests of the United States.” Mr. Arar was never charged with any crime in the U.S. or in Canada.

Rep. Markey also released a follow-up letter to newly-confirmed Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice renewing his request to the State Department to cooperate with the Canadian investigation. In his letter Rep. Markey noted that Canada was one of America’s closest allies and that deserved to receive full cooperation from the U.S. Government. In the letter, Rep. Markey asked the State Department to explain the basis for its determination that Mr. Arar posed a threat to U.S. national security and asked why Mr. Arar was deported to Syria instead of Canada.

Rep. Markey has been a leading opponent of the practice of “extraordinary rendition” where certain foreign nationals are detained in the U.S. and deported to countries where they may face torture. Rep. Markey introduced legislation last June to outlaw extraordinary rendition, and he is preparing to reintroduce this legislation in the new Congress.

“Rendering prisoners to other nations to be interrogated under torture is immoral and only increases the likelihood that U.S. prisoners will themselves face torture in the future. The Arar case raises some disturbing questions about how the Bush Administration’s rendition policies have operated, including whether the Administration has effectively decided to outsource torture to countries such as Syria,” concluded Markey.